

Amnesty International

*Oral statement on the outcome on the Republic of Korea under the UPR*

*12 June 2008*

*Check against delivery*

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the call on the government, made during the review of the Republic of Korea (South Korea), to pass the special bill to abolish the death penalty into law in the new National Assembly. We also welcome recommendations to abolish the National Security Law or amend it to bring it in line with international standards, and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

Several recommendations focus on the need to ensure increased protection of the rights of migrant workers in South Korea, a serious human rights concern shared by Amnesty International. Since November 2003, the government has implemented a series of crack-downs leading to the arrest, detention and deportation of irregular migrant workers. Migrant workers face discrimination in the workplace and abuse by employers and state officials. Women migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, such as sexual harassment and violence.

Amnesty International also deeply regrets the deportation of the president and vice-president of the Migrants' Trade Union in May 2008, despite an ongoing investigation by the National Human Rights Commission into their arrests, including allegations of abuse.

Mr. President,

Amnesty International strongly encourages the government to implement the recommendations to accede to the Migrant Workers Convention; to withdraw the reservation on article 22 of the ICCPR; to protect female migrant workers against discriminatory practices; and ensure access of all migrant workers to the justice system. Finally, on the occasion of South Korea's re-election to the Council, we call on the government to follow through on its election pledge to ratify the four ILO Fundamental Conventions related to the right to freedom of association, to organize, and on abolition of forced labour (the Conventions on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98); Forced Labor Convention (No 29); Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (No 105).

Thank you, Mr President.